

Examining the role of summer short-courses as a tool for Scottish Gaelic language revitalization

Colleen Patton

PhD student, Department of Linguistics

University of Arizona

cpatton@email.arizona.edu

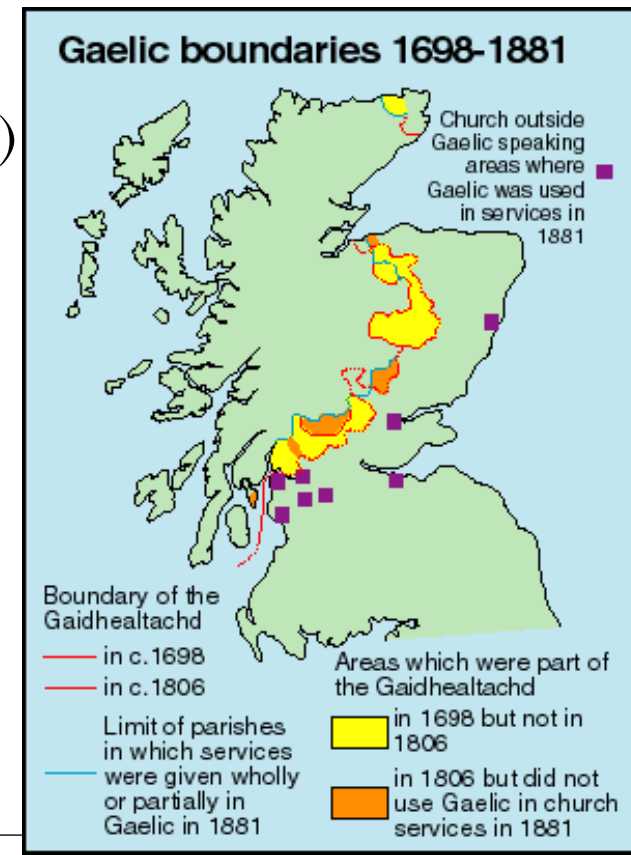


Language Revitalization

- Language Revitalization
 - An attempt by interested parties to reverse the decline of, or the shift away from, using a language
- Language acquisition
 - Increase speaker numbers, domains of use, restore IGT
- Restructuring the language ecology (Grenoble 2011, Mühlhäusler, 1992, 2003, 2010)
 - Increase language prestige, presence of language, inform public policy changes, focus on relationships of wider linguistic situation
- Types of programs:
 - Language nests
 - Bilingual schools
 - Master-Apprentice
 - Community-based camps/weekends
- Factors for success:
 - Community commitment and enthusiasm
 - Achievable goals

Gaelic Language in Scotland

- Gaelic in the Scottish Highlands and Islands (Gàidhealtachd)
 - Scots, English (both Germanic)
- Gaelic language attrition
 - Highland Clearances (18th and 19th cent.)
 - English-only education in Scotland (1872)
 - Surge in bilingualism and English dominance
- Roughly 58,000 Gaelic users—
1% of population (2011 Census)
 - Highland & Western Isles: 259,816 (5%)
over 13,023 sq. mi.(44%)



A comeback!

- Gaelic language development
 - Gaelic Language Act (2005)
 - Bòrd na Gàidhlig (Gaelic Language Board)
 - “to promote Gaelic and to strive in partnership with the Scottish Government, the people of Scotland and the Gaelic organizations to improve the status of the language throughout Scotland”
 - Gaelic immersion schools
 - [Sgoil Ghàidhlig Ghlaschu](#) (Glasgow Gaelic School)
 - *Not traditional Gàidhealtachd!
 - Higher education degree programs (BA, MA, PhD)
 - Sabhal Mòr Ostaig Gaelic Medium!

Sabhal Mòr Ostaig (SMO) Gaelic College

- Located on the Isle of Skye
- Founded in 1973
- Offered its first full-time further education course in 1983
- National Centre for Gaelic Language and Culture
 - Expands its existing work in teaching, learning, culture, and research
 - Music, literature, media studies, language planning and economic development, language pedagogy
- Research with Soillse/BnG
- BA and MA degrees entirely in Gaelic, PhD research, short term courses

SMO short courses

- Available throughout the year (Easter, Summer, refresher weekends)
- Summer Courses - June and September 2014
 - Each course is 5 days in length, M-F
- Total enrollment of ~700
- Culture and language immersion
 - Gaelic 1-10
 - Exploring Skye with Gaelic
 - Alasdair Fraser Fiddle Week
 - Gaelic Song and Traditions
 - Piping and Drumming Week

Research questions

- Investigate the role of short-term immersion courses in language revitalization
 - Language acquisition?
Intergenerational transmission?
- What are the motivations to attend these short courses?



Claims

- Scottish Gaelic short-courses at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig directly aid language revitalization through the reshaping of language ecologies
 - Increased awareness, personal connections, positive experience with language and culture
- Short-courses indirectly lead to increased speaker numbers and language use

Research Goals

- Immediate Goals
 - To identify trends in the motivations of participants to attend
 - To capture Gaelic language attitudes information
 - To identify trends in the demographics of participants
 - To record self-reported Gaelic language use
 - To record self-reported Gaelic language abilities
- Longterm Goals
 - Gain insight into the status of Gaelic language in Scotland today
 - Evaluation of success of this program for SMO
 - Evaluation of success of this program for language revitalization
 - Provide a potential model for revitalization for language communities in the UK and beyond

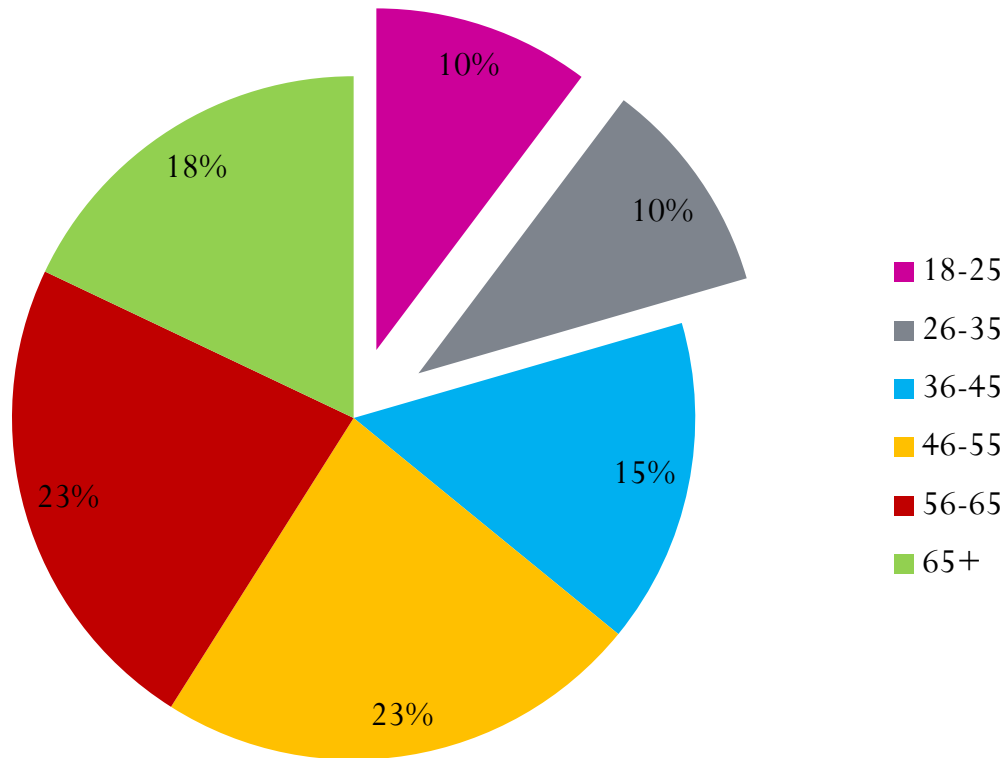
Research Methods

- Gaelic language and culture immersion courses
 - July 1st – September 1st 2014
 - Stand alone 5 day courses
- Methodology:
 - All course participants were invited to complete an anonymous survey and return it to a collections box in the reception area of SMO at the end of their course
 - Surveys were scanned and emailed
 - SMO keeps a hard and electronic copy, I keep an electronic copy

Survey Results

- Surveys
 - 39 counted
 - 3 discarded (More than 50% of survey left blank, Irish respondents did not make it clear whether they were marking for Irish or Scottish Gaelic)
 - Courses represented:
 - Gaelic 1-10
 - Exploring Skye with Gaelic
 - Gaelic for Irish Speakers
 - Gaelic Song
 - Gaelic Conversation
 - Family learning week

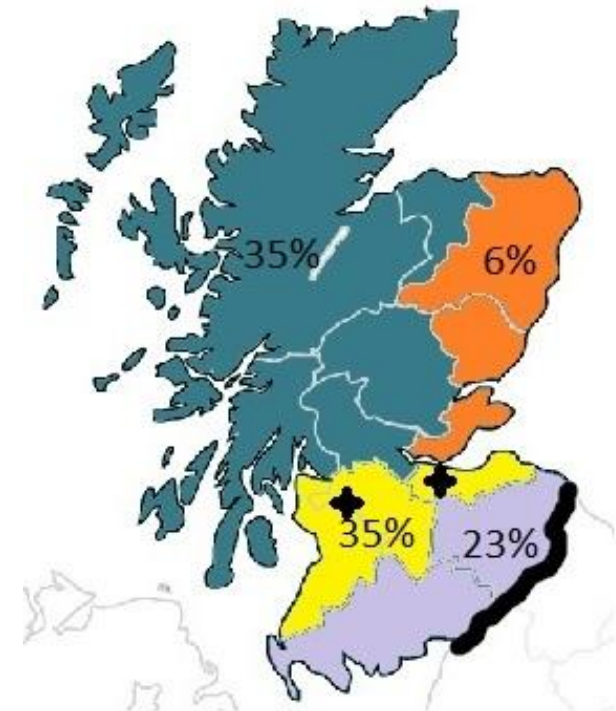
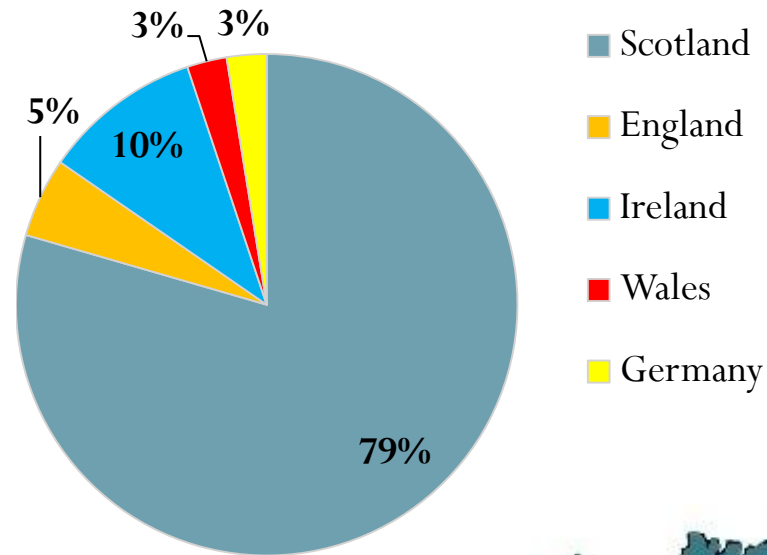
Age Group



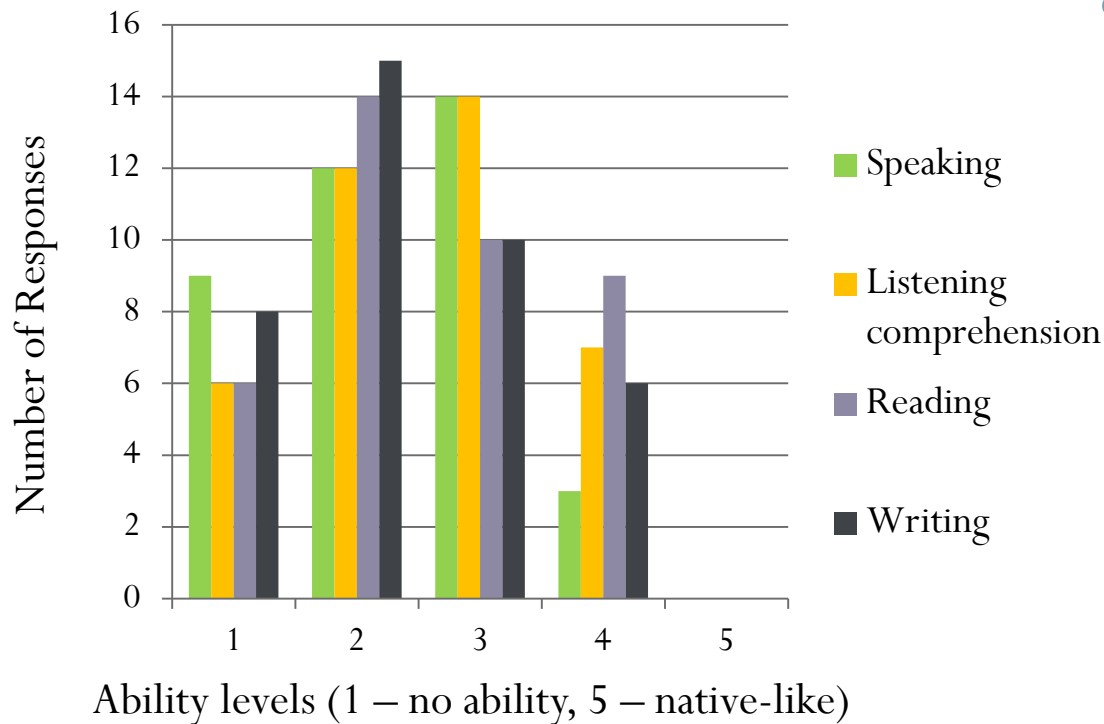
- Only 20% of respondents were between 18-35
- 64% of respondents were 46+
- Small percentage of adults who are likely to be parents or primary care givers
 - 2 respondents on Family Learning Week above the 18-35 age range

Location

- 5 countries represented
- 13% of respondents from Ireland and Wales
 - Special course for Irish (Gaelige) speakers interested in learning Gàidhlig
- 5% from England
- 3% (1 respondent) from Germany
- 79% of respondents from throughout Scotland
 - 35% from traditional speaker area
 - 35% from Edinburgh/Glasgow
 - 29% from rest of country



Level of Gaelic



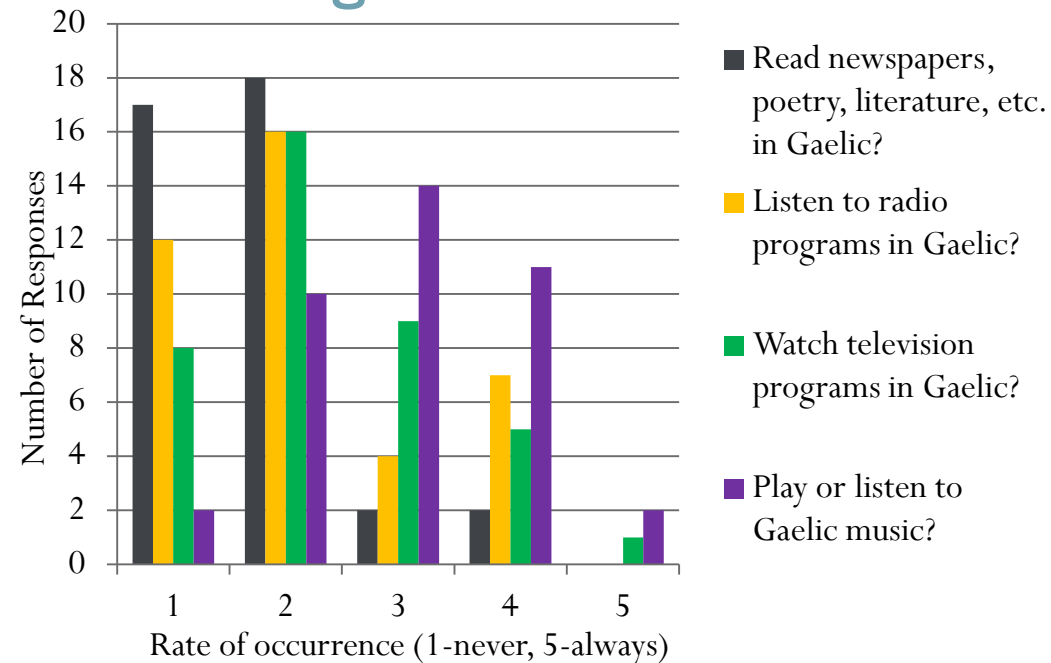
- Beginning to intermediate ability levels (1-3)
 - Lack of advanced speaker enrichment
 - Potential to continue on and further their skills

Language Use

Speaking Gaelic with...

- 69%-87% of respondents **NEVER** speak with...
 - Parents' generation
 - Grandparents' generation
 - Grandchildren's generation
 - Coworkers
- Friends
 - 41% – never
 - 46% – sometimes
 - 3% – regularly
 - 3% – often
- Children's generation
 - 56% – never
 - 13% – sometimes
 - 8% – regularly
 - 8% – often

Using Gaelic...



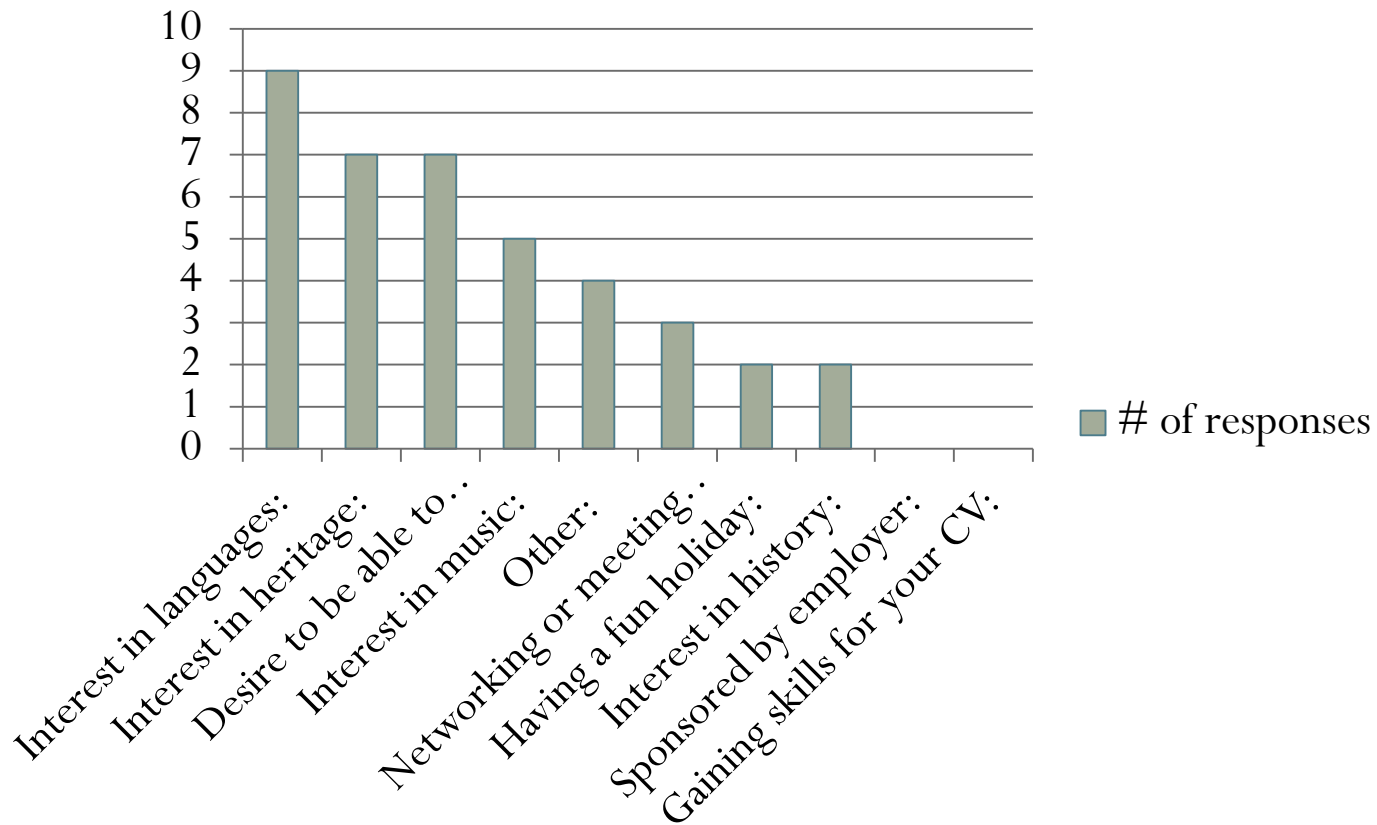
- Highest average occurrence of use for Gaelic music (69% at least “regularly”)
- Second highest for TV (38% at least “regularly”)

Results - Motivations

- Respondents were asked to rank their top three motivations from a choice of ten
- Percent of responses for a single motivation:
 - 1st : Interest in heritage (25%)
 - 2nd: Interest in languages (23%)
 - 3rd: Interest in music (14%)

- Other responses included:
 - *Raise child in Gaelic Medium, raise child bilingually, preserve the language*
 - Place names
 - Hobby

Most important motivation



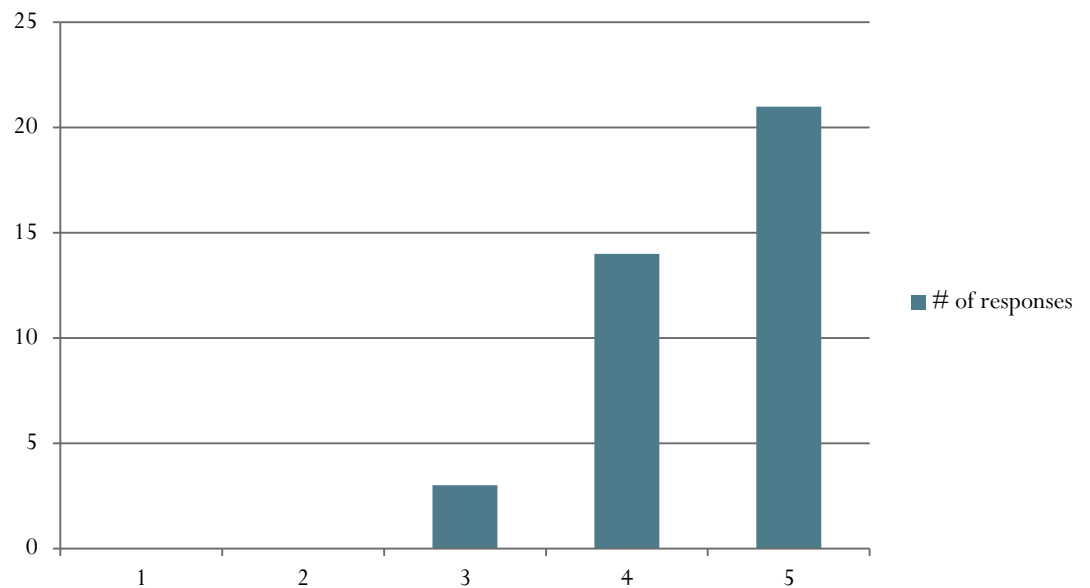
Results – Belief statements

- I would like to continue learning Gaelic on my own.
- I would like to continue learning Gaelic through courses.
- I would like to participate in this program again.
- I feel more confident about my Gaelic language abilities.
- I enjoy using Gaelic.
- I believe that children should learn Gaelic.
- I believe that Gaelic education should be more present in public schools.
- I believe that Gaelic is useful in my everyday life.

Results – Belief statements

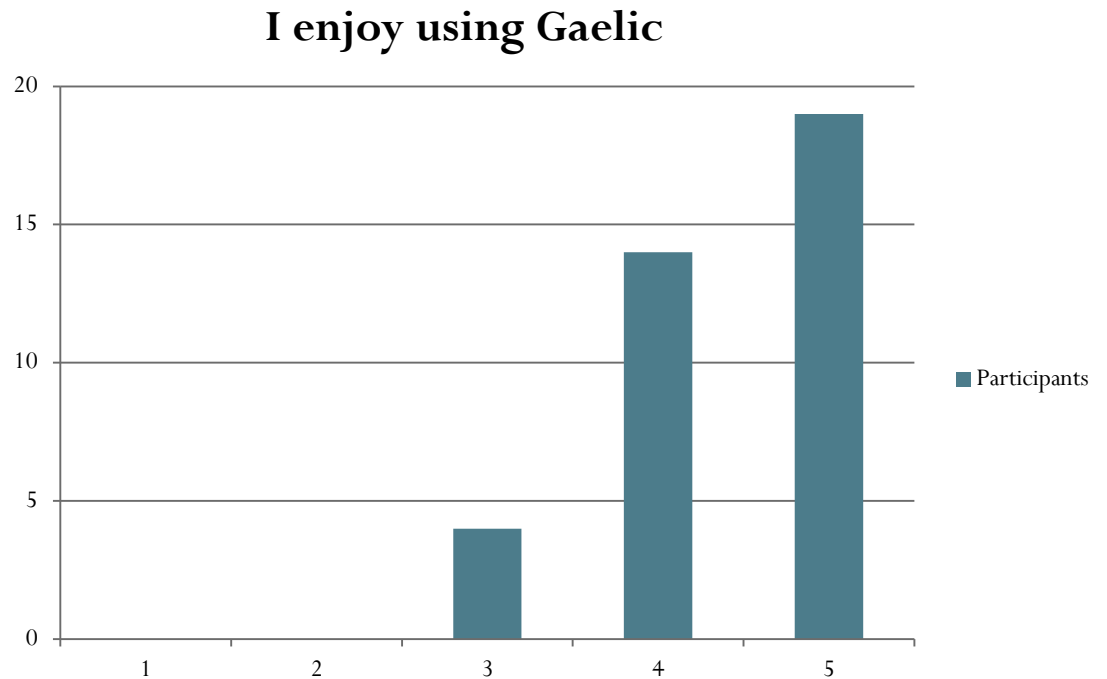
- No respondents disagree
- 97% agree (4,5)
- 2 NR

I would like to continue learning Gaelic through courses.



Results – Belief statements

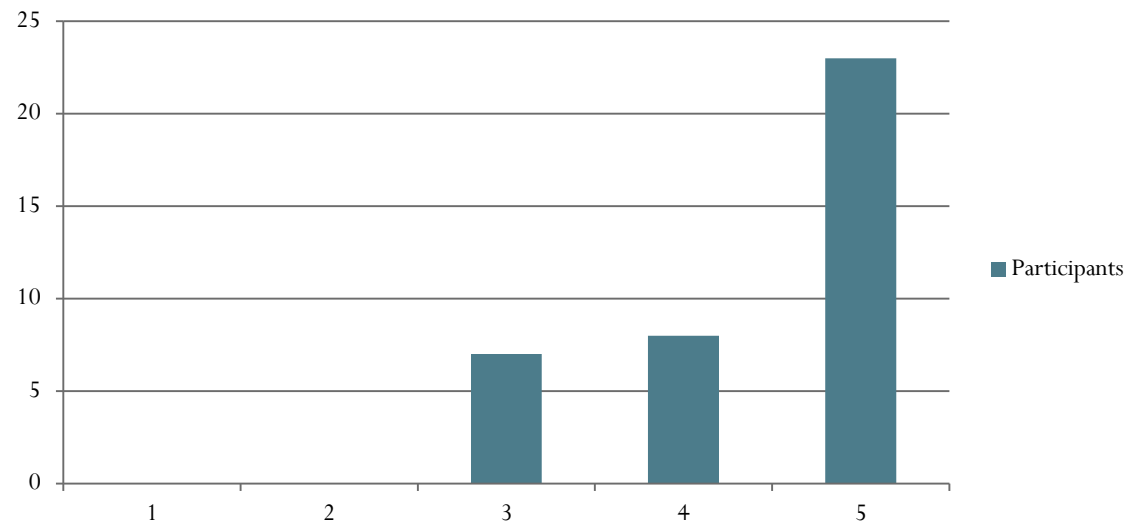
- No respondents disagree
- 92% agree (4,5)
- 1 NR



Results – Belief statements

- No respondents disagree
- 86% agree (4,5)
- 1 NR
- 1 comment: “local authority” schools

I believe that Gaelic education should be more present in public schools



Results – Belief statements

- Weakest agreement:
 - “I believe that Gaelic is useful in everyday life.”

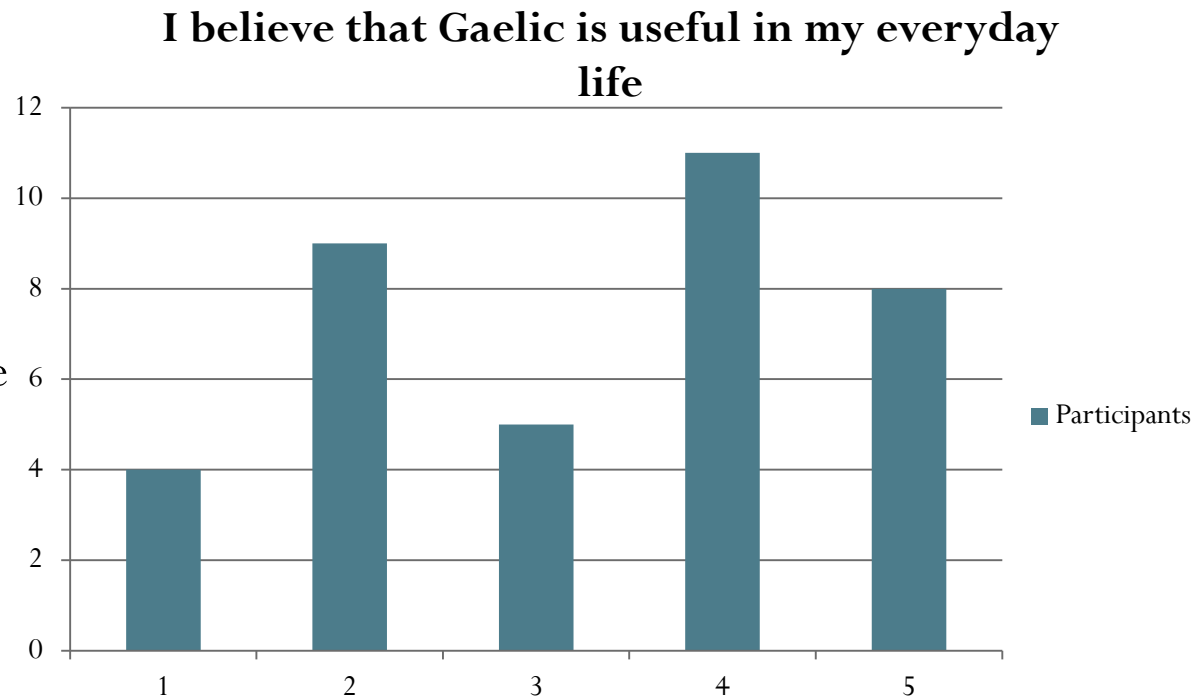
- 36% disagree (1,2)

53% agree (4, 5)

2 NR

- The disconnect:

- Enjoying the language and wanting children to learn and speak the language
- Not believing the language to be useful
 - Why?
 - Location, age, values



Additional Comments

- Respondents invited to supply additional comments or thoughts at the end of the survey
 - “Father, born in Skye and was a native speaker. Due to attempts by **London government to exterminate all things ‘Gàidhlig,’** I was denied Gaelic culture and language”
 - “I wish it were easier to access APPROPRIATE [less expensive] courses in Edinburgh, but however will continue until goal of fluency is achieved, and **summer short courses are a very welcome part of achieving said goal.** Chord e rium gu dearbh.”
 - "I feel that [these] courses **reinforce confidence in learners to speak out and be braver with their use of Gaelic** and to witness the benefits of progressing with the language, through watching their children gain confidence and enjoy the culture, as well as themselves **feeling involved in a positive, progressive, friendly, stimulating cultural environment.**”

Conclusions: Why does it matter?

- Benefits
 - Restructuring language ecologies
 - Opportunity to present language through music and excursion based courses
 - Promoting awareness of endangerment
 - Builds an appreciation for and personal connection to the language
 - Sabhal Mòr Ostaig's "short courses experience"
 - Go beyond the classroom to tie the language and culture together, establish relationships and friendships to view Gaelic and the Gaels positively

Conclusions: Why does it matter?

- Drawbacks
 - What about **acquisition**?
 - What about **children**?
 - SMO's other goals
 - A feeder system for distance learning and full courses at SMO
 - Increase numbers in stronger programs
 - Repeat participants
- Extension and applicability for other communities?
 - Dependent upon the goals and resources available to each individual language community

Further Research

- Compare with SMO's institutional surveys
 - Less overlap and tedium for participants
 - Create research which fills in the gaps for SMO's needs
- Check-in: have participants continued learning?
- Consider other short-term programs, beyond Gaelic
 - Breton – a Celtic comparison!

Tapadh leibh

- Caledonian Society of Hawai‘i (www.scotsinhawaii.org)
- Sabhal Mòr Ostaig Short Courses Team
(<http://www.smo.uhi.ac.uk/en/cursaichean/cursaichean-goirid/>)
- University of Arizona Gaelic Lab

Questions? Comments?

- cpatton@email.arizona.edu

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